

Message Text

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 205

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VT, LE

SUBJECT: VATICAN VIEWS ON LEBANESE CRISIS

REF A. STATE 3249 B. ROME 124

1. WE BELIEVE VATICAN'S APPROACH TO AMB LODGE'S OFFICE
ON LEBANESE CRISIS AFFORDS GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR U.S. TO RESPOND
WITH COMMENT OF OUR OWN AND SUGGEST THIS MIGHT BE MADE ALONG
FOLLOWING LINES:

A. AS VATICAN AWARE, THE U.S. SUPPORTS A POLITICAL SOLUTION
BASED ON MODERATION, CONCILIATION AND COMPROMISE.

B. WHETHER OUT OF FEAR OF BEING ABANDONED OR FOR TACTICAL REA-
SONS THE CHRISTIAN POSITION AS EXPRESSED BY PROMINENT CHRISTIAN
LEADERS APPEARS TO BE QUITE UNYIELDING AND, IN OUR JUDGEMENT
HAS RENDERED THE SITUATION MORE CRITICAL AND MORE DIFFICULT
TO RESOLVE ALONG THE LINES ENVISAGED BY THE VATICAN. IN CANDOR
WE HAVE FOUND PARTICULARLY UNHELPFUL, FOR EXAMPLE, THE RECENT
INTERVIEW (BEIRUT 69) GIVEN BY THE SUPERIOR OF THE RELIGIOUS
ORDERS IN LEBANON, MONSIGNOR CHARBEL KASSIS, WHO INCIDENTALLY
IS REPORTED TO HAVE STATED FREQUENTLY THAT HE DEPENDS DIRECTLY
ON THE VATICAN AND NOT ON MARONITE PATRIARCH KHREISH.

C. CONCERNING PATRIARCH KHREISH, THE AMBASSADOR HAS
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MAINTAINED A CLOSE DIALOGUE WITH HIS BEATITUDE AND CON-

CLUDES THAT THERE EXISTS GREAT SIMILARITY OF VIEW WITH RESPECT TO THE NEED FOR MODERATION, CONCILIATION AND COMPROMISE AND WITH RESPECT TO SEEKING A POLITICAL RATHER THAN A MILITARY SOLUTION.

D. WE ARE AWARE THAT THERE IS MUCH SUPPORT FOR THE PARTITION OF LEBANON AMONG THE CHRISTIANS. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT CONSIDER PARTITION A SOLUTION TO LEBANON'S TRAGIC PROBLEM. PARTITION, IN OUR VIEW, WOULD WORK AGAINST THE LONG-TERM CHRISTIAN INTERESTS AND TALK ABOUT PARTITION WORKS AGAINST THEIR SHORT-TERM INTEREST.

E. REGARDING THE QUESTION OF PREDOMINANCE, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE PRINCIPAL MOSLEM GROUPS ARE NOT SEEKING A MAJORITY REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT, BUT EQUAL REPRESENTATION, AND IT WAS RECENT CHRISTIAN MOVES BACKING AWAY FROM THIS CONCEPT AFTER APPEARING TO ACCEPT IT THAT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO RENEWED TENSIONS.

F. WITH REFERENCE TO OUTSIDE INTERVENTION, THERE IS LITTLE QUESTION THAT BOTH LIBYA AND IRAQI INFLUENCE HAS BEEN QUITE DAMAGING. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE DISCERNED NUMEROUS POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ASPECTS TO THE ROLE SYRIA HAS PLAYED.

G. THE QUESTION OF POSSIBLE CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION ON THE LEBANESE CRISIS IS A MATTER CURRENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION. (NOTE: IF SUCH IS IN FACT THE CASE.)

H. WE GREATLY APPRECIATE BEING INFORMED OF THE VATICAN'S THINKING ON THIS SAD ISSUE. WE UNDERSTAND FULLY THE VATICAN'S HISTORICAL INTEREST IN THE CHRISTIANS OF LEBANON AND ITS HUMANITARIAN INTEREST IN THE WELFARE OF ALL LEBANESE. WE WELCOME THE EFFORTS OF ALL THOSE IN SEARCH OF A JUST AND EQUITABLE SOLUTION.

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